

**Security Council**

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mrs. Loguzzo
	China	Mr. Cheng Lie
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De Rivi�re
	Ghana	Ms. Seanedzu
	Greece	Ms. Yannakou
	Japan	Ms. Okagaki
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Ansari
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zheglov
	Slovakia	Mr. Harmanovsk�y
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . .	Ms. Johansen
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Donovan

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826)

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The meeting resumed at 3.30 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have just received a letter from the representative of Thailand in which she requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Laohaphan (Thailand) took the seat reserved for her at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind all speakers, as I indicated during the morning session, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): At the outset I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate, and to thank the delegation of France for their tireless efforts as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. May I also commend the Special Representative and all United Nations agencies involved in this vital work.

The Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) makes very sobering reading. It is a wake-up call for all of us. Children continue to be disproportionately killed in conflict situations. The recruitment and use of child soldiers is also rife, even where action plans are in place. The grave violations documented in the report are carried out with seeming impunity.

But the report of the Secretary-General also demonstrates that while grave violations continue, there has been some progress. New Zealand welcomes steps taken to deploy the monitoring mechanism across the seven situations designated as priorities for the first

phase of implementation, and the initial work on developing and implementing action plans. Further, the deployment by Department of Peacekeeping Operations of child protection advisers into peacekeeping operations is an important step in helping raise awareness among United Nations civilian police, military observers and peacekeepers that operate on the front lines.

Rehabilitation and reintegration work has also progressed. Tens of thousands of children and former child soldiers are benefiting through programmes such as the United Nations-backed Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, and the demobilization, reintegration and prevention of child soldiers programme in Burundi, in partnership with UNICEF and the World Bank. New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID) has continued its work in support of children affected by armed conflict, funding programmes through Save the Children in Niger, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Mozambique and the Solomon Islands.

There is no ambiguity: no situation involving children in armed conflict is acceptable. We need to take further measures to ensure the protection of children in such situations.

New Zealand supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that attention not be limited to child soldiers, but focus on the wider impact of armed conflict on children, including killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access for children. It is also important to ensure that equal care and attention is given to children affected in all armed conflicts, not just selected situations.

For action to be effective, all parties need to ensure that adequate resources and funding are available for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and other associated activities.

The work of an expanded monitoring mechanism will provide further deterrence to those that carry out despicable acts against children. In connection with this effort, we strongly support the ongoing work of the International Criminal Court to bring to justice those individuals responsible for the gravest breaches. Parties that commit grave violations against children should expect that the international community will take measures against them.

Finally, Mr. President, we call on all Members to show real commitment by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me first of all to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you preside over this important meeting of the Council. We would like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for their presentations.

It is with firm conviction that the Government of Colombia continues to make progress in building peace. Its democratic security policy has not only allowed for the recovery of the presence of legitimate institutions and law enforcement in all the municipalities of the country, but also for the strengthening of the rule of law. It has also led to greater respect for and protection of human rights, and to the implementation of social programmes aimed at the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Democracy in Colombia continues to be solid and stable. Our Government recently started a second mandate, thanks to the unprecedented backing it received in free, transparent and democratic elections. In recent years, nearly 43,000 members of illegal armed groups have been demobilized, which has been reflected in a clear reduction in the recruitment of children. The Colombian State established by law the obligation not to recruit or link children less than 18 years of age to the armed forces and has strictly applied this prohibition. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826) indicates, violent groups outside the law are the only parties that are responsible for the recruitment of children in Colombia.

Thanks to the democratic security policy, the number of kidnappings has also been reduced and the phenomenon of internal displacement has slowed down. The number of newly displaced persons went from 450,000 in 2002 to 169,000 in 2005 and is at 90,000 so far in 2006. From November 1999 until September 2006, more than 3,000 children separated from illegal armed groups have entered into special care programmes established by the Colombian Family

Welfare Institute. There, they are helped in different stages, depending on their conditions and needs, with the objective of reintegrating them with their families and their social environment.

Faithfully applying the Ottawa Convention, the armed forces of Colombia have destroyed their stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines. Furthermore, the Government is carrying out arduous and intensive demining action, for which we have received the support of several United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and United Nations Development Programme, as well as that of friendly countries, among them some current members of the Security Council.

The commitment of the Colombian State to international law and international humanitarian law is total. We will not relent in our determination to restore peace to the civilian population. We will turn to the international community for support whenever necessary in order to bring affected communities decent conditions for their social and economic recovery. We will also turn to the international community to call for its commitment and political will to effectively tackle the global drug problem.

Each gram of cocaine consumed by addicts is a gram that is transformed into financial resources for illegal armed groups that recruit and use children in Colombia. Each gram consumed is a potential cause of death and serious injury. Each gram consumed leads to the planting of anti-personnel mines that leave behind hundreds of victims. The drugs consumed by addicts and the money paid for them are transformed into illicit arms trafficking, forced displacement, violation of the rights of indigenous peoples and the destruction of our forests. Vulnerable groups, and children in particular, suffer directly from those consequences.

My country joins in the strong rejection of the recruitment and use of children repeatedly expressed by the international community. We do not hesitate also to point out that dealing with this problem is the primary responsibility of States, and that any action by the international community must first have the full consent of Governments.

From that point of view, we have reviewed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. In that connection, allow me to respectfully set out some of my country's concerns. First, the recommendation that the Council should give

equal attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern is not appropriate. It could be understood as an attempt to suppress the differences between annex I and annex II of the report of the Secretary-General. There are conditions particular to each situation that led the Council to clearly differentiate them in the two annexes.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism was established a little over a year ago, and there has been agreement on conclusions on only two situations. Moreover, there must first be ample discussion of the independent review requested by the Security Council on the implementation of that mechanism, instead of proposing changes to the established approach and procedures. For all of those reasons, it is clear that operative paragraph 3 of resolution 1612 (2005) must be preserved in its entirety.

Secondly, nor is it appropriate to give other grave violations affecting children the same weight given to the recruitment and use of children. Those additional grave violations must all be strongly condemned, but they are not the reason why this issue was brought to the Council. A change in emphasis would weaken the main objective that is being sought: to put an end to the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. The Council must continue giving greater emphasis to the achievement of that objective.

Thirdly, the recommendation that Council expand to all situations of concern its call for the parties involved to prepare action plans is equally inappropriate. According to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), action plans must be based on a process coordinated by a focal point designated by the Secretary-General and charged with ensuring that the parties engage in dialogue. In the case of Colombia, this would entail interference in the role of the Government and the State to address the actions of groups outside the law.

Action plans must therefore continue to be prepared only for those situations that are on the agenda of the Council, in accordance with resolution 1539 (2004).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy,

Ms. Ann M. Veneman and Mr. Gabriel Oling Olang who gave interesting briefings on this important topic this morning. On the whole, Uganda welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826). It will go a long way in strengthening the machinery for protecting children caught up in unfortunate situations of armed conflict and generally preventing under-age children from being recruited into armed forces. We welcome in particular the operationalization of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and pledge our support to its success.

However, I think the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be well defined and should not extend beyond situations that appear on the agenda of the Security Council.

Because of constraints of time, my delegation will confine its remarks to paragraphs 107 to 111 of the report, which concern Uganda. When the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict visited Uganda, a four-principle understanding on the issue of children and armed conflict, as a basis for strengthening the existing legal and policy frameworks, was agreed on. Those principles are enumerated in my written statement, copies of which are available to Council members. I will not go through each one of them, again because of time constraints.

We are committed to those principles. Although the report acknowledges that the Government of Uganda does not have an official policy to recruit children, it goes on to assert, rather boldly, that "children are present among the local defence units and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)" (S/2006/826, para. 108). That is not true. Let me emphasize that the existing legal framework and policy does not allow the recruitment of persons below the age of 18 into the UPDF or local defence forces. There has been no recruitment into the UPDF — although there have been some interviews — since the visit of the Special Representative, and so no children could have been recruited. On the contrary, auxiliary forces are being demobilized in the Teso and Lango subregions as peace returns to those areas. Further, as a sign of cooperation, designated institutions that so request have access to military institutions.

The Government of Uganda respects its national laws and its obligations under international conventions and protocols against the recruitment and use of children in armed forces. Sensitization of various stakeholders to those laws is under way. Whenever the UPDF has rescued abducted children from Lord's Resistance Army rebels, they are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Those above the age of 18 who freely express the wish to join the armed forces are recruited.

I am glad to report that the Government has finalized its action plan, as promised, and will soon discuss it with relevant stakeholders so that it can be operationalized.

It is not correct, as asserted in the report, that there are many reported cases of sexual exploitation and sexual violence against girls by Uganda's armed forces. One example cited in the report cannot justify such a sweeping statement. The Government does not tolerate impunity, and severe punishment is meted out to any isolated case of misbehaviour on the part of an offending member of the armed forces. The UPDF is a highly disciplined force.

I want to commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her good cooperation with the Uganda Government. This is a marked departure from her predecessor, who seized on every opportunity, for his own hidden political agenda, to demonize the Uganda Government. We certainly do not miss him. He falsely listed the UPDF and local defence forces in annex II of reports on children and armed conflict as organizations recruiting children into armed forces. We have been pressing for the removal of those organizations from the annex. It is our hope that under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy that will be done. It is not a favour; it is the correction of a wrong.

Finally, Uganda commends the Security Council for its presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/45) calling for international support for the Juba peace talks and for the talks to be concluded expeditiously, and calling on the Lord's Resistance Army to immediately release children, women and non-combatants. Moreover, we commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her press statement to that effect. The Juba peace talks should not be turned into a money-making business for some people. We are looking forward to the day when the

children of northern Uganda will no longer live in fear of abduction and all manner of atrocities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. We also wish to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and others for their presentations and invaluable contributions, which have enriched this debate.

South Africa aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the landmark United Nations report (A/51/306) on the impact of armed conflict on children by Ms. Graça Machel, the first independent expert to be appointed by the Organization on this issue. The subject of children and armed conflict had never before been studied in depth. The Machel report was ground-breaking and led to the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in 1997.

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increasing focus by the international community on the promotion and protection of children affected by armed conflict. There are international instruments and norms as well as national legislation providing for the protection, rights and well-being of children. There are also concrete commitments on children and armed conflict that have been entered into by parties to conflict. A growing momentum now exists for the application on the ground of international standards and norms aimed at the protection of children. It is imperative that that momentum be maintained in order to consolidate the gains that have been registered and to further advance the agenda on children and armed conflict.

Despite that impetus, my delegation is deeply concerned that new situations have arisen that make it difficult for us to enjoy the gains we have made in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report (S/2006/826) states that the recent escalation of violence in the

Middle East and in other regions of the world has resulted in countless child victims. Furthermore, the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, the denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals, have spread within regions and across borders.

Concerted efforts should be made by all parties to prevent or mitigate further violations through dialogue and the active participation of all stakeholders involved in the protection of children. For that reason, the monitoring and reporting mechanism established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be supported so that it can effectively address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children, especially in the area of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of children.

My delegation notes with interest the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the Security Council's focus in order to give equal care and attention to all categories of grave violations committed against children. There is merit in that proposal, and my delegation will reflect further on it. However, the recruitment and use of child soldiers are still a major problem, and the role of the Security Council has been strengthened to address that issue.

The Council has been given the mandate to consider imposing certain measures against parties on its agenda that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict and are in violation of applicable international law. Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) called on parties to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams. We are pleased to note that, to date, action plans and advocacy efforts have been made with a number of parties in situations of armed conflict.

Much needs to be done on the ground to protect children from the devastating impact of armed conflict. It is therefore disturbing that sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel continue. The ability of Member States and the United Nations to respond effectively to allegations of abuse should be strengthened. In that regard, we support the comprehensive United Nations strategy to address

sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the establishment by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a conduct and discipline team at its headquarters and in peace operations.

A positive development is the deployment on a case-by-case basis of child protection advisers in certain United Nations peacekeeping operations. Such advisers have been effective in gathering information for monitoring and reporting purposes and in mainstreaming child protection within missions and through mission training programmes. However, there is room for improvement. We are looking forward to receiving a study on the child protection experience in peace operations, which will contain a comprehensive assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the child protection advisers.

Sustained investment in health and social infrastructures, as well as education and skills training, will ensure the successful integration of children into their communities and will prevent re-recruitment. Special attention should be given to girl children who have been exploited by armed forces and groups. Deeper understanding is required of the acute vulnerability of girls in situations of armed conflict. Such an understanding should inform more gender-sensitive strategies as well as protection and programme responses. The rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces requires immediate attention. Adequate funding and resources should be made available by the international community to assist national efforts to develop relevant and effective programmes that will ensure the long-term sustainability and success of such interventions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): It is my honour to make this short statement on behalf of the States of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional group of States comprising Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand, Slovenia and, as an observer, South Africa. Today's statement by the Network supplements our statement of 24 July 2006 (see S/PV.5494) as well as our letter to the Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

Let me thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's open debate and the Secretary-General for providing us with his report on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), covering the period of the past year, as well as for the report of the independent review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, issued on 16 November 2006.

The Network wishes to encourage the Security Council and the wider United Nations system to continue efforts to prevent or end all violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. The report of the Secretary-General, while reflecting progress made, also highlights new situations of great concern that have arisen, such as situations involving child victims of the recent violence in the Middle East, including in Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

We welcome the detailed nature of the report, which focuses both on situations of concern on the Council's agenda and on those outside its formal purview. Both lists, annexes I and II, are useful, especially as they help to identify the parties involved, including non-State actors. Only by understanding the complexities and demands of each situation can we begin to comprehend trends and effectively address violations against children caught up, as victims, in armed conflict.

It also enables us to understand better the similarities between different situations, as well as the interlinkages, such as the increasingly migratory nature of the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations within regions.

The States of the Network wish to highlight some of the points relating to cross-thematic issues of concern. First, the Network welcomes measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel, building on the work of the Secretary-General's Adviser on the issue, Prince Zeid, the Ambassador of Jordan. Yet as evidence of abuse continues to be seen, we call on both peacekeeping missions and troop-contributing States to continue and intensify their endeavours for training and awareness-raising on the one hand, and investigation and the taking of disciplinary action against perpetrators on the other.

Secondly, reliable, accurate and objective monitoring is essential. The Network continues to be a strong supporter of the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. We welcome the progress made in establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the resulting information transmitted through reports to the Security Council on specific situations and through the "horizontal" reports on situations of concern to the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We commend the Working Group for its excellent reports to date and encourage it to continue its good work. We also wish to emphasize the fact that, as the situation of children in armed conflicts is of a grave concern to the international community, the utmost care should be exercised to ensure the full accuracy of the reports.

Thirdly, the inclusion of specific child protection expertise within the United Nations system — especially in the field — needs to be continued. We are looking forward to the study currently being undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the child protection experience in peace operations, so as to help us to improve the efficiency of the important work done by the Child Protection Advisers and to strengthen their role in United Nations missions.

Fourthly, we need to sharpen our sensitivity in addressing gender-based violations, paying special attention to girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups.

Fifthly, the Secretary-General indicates a mixed picture regarding progress in the area of action plans by parties pursuant to resolution 1539 (2004). In some cases, parties have offered cooperation in setting up such action plans, while in others such cooperation is still lacking. The setting up of concrete time-bound action plans and their implementation by the parties involved needs constant monitoring by the Security Council in all situations that warrant such action plans. The Security Council needs to respond effectively against the parties that continue to commit grave violations against children, in defiance of Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, the Network, based on its holistic vision of human security, calls upon the Security Council, in the words of paragraph 134 of the report (A/2006/826), to

"consider expanding its focus and give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern; and to give equal weight to all categories of grave violations beyond the recruitment and use of child soldiers to include the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access for children."

Similarly, all parts of the world that give cause for concern need to be encompassed. A case in point is the Middle East. All violations, wherever and by whomever committed, result in grave harm to a child's physical and psychological security and well-being. All such grave violations should be accorded the necessary vigilance and commitment to their prevention and eradication by the Security Council and the international community as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Guatemala, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Skinner-Kléé (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Peruvian presidency for having convened this meeting to discuss, for the second time this year, the important issue of children and armed conflict. We would also like to thank those who briefed the Council at the beginning of the debate. We would like to express our gratitude, in particular, for the work done by UNICEF to protect boys, girls and adolescents caught up in armed conflict. We would also like to acknowledge the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless work to put an end to the recruitment of children.

A little over four months have gone by since we last met together in this forum to assess the situation of children and armed conflict in the world; indeed, there are no easy solutions to the problem of the use of children as soldiers. On that occasion, my delegation referred to the importance of establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism, as well as to the important work carried out by the Working Group set up by the Council in July 2005 and chaired by the Permanent Representative of France. I would like to make a few brief comments in this connection.

Even though we are aware of the various positions on this issue, we are pleased to see the

determination shown by the Working Group and by the Council in categorically condemning the recruitment of children as soldiers, as well as the rigorous condemnation of those who continue to commit these crimes against humanity. We also supported the adoption of resolution 1698 (2006), which set the standard for the imposition of sanctions as a response to the abuse of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We trust that henceforth the recommendations of the Working Group will be implemented, since they are an effective way of combating and preventing that horrendous practice.

We understand the limitations that the Working Group and the Security Council face, not only with respect to the mandate to consider situations in countries that are not on the agenda of the Security Council, but also in terms of the amount of resources and time required to produce specific results regarding the actors involved in using children in armed conflict. Furthermore, we are concerned that a heavier workload for the Working Group could be detrimental to its efficiency and effectiveness.

Despite that, we agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that we should expand the criteria that we currently use — which is limited for the time being to the recruitment and use of child soldiers — to include other violations and serious crimes, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape, abduction and the denial of humanitarian access.

Despite all of the efforts that we have made, we continue to hear horrendous stories about children who have suffered as a result of being recruited in situations of armed conflict, and we reaffirm the need to impose measures with specific and gradual objectives through which we can identify the parties to a conflict that have committed grave violations against children. Any decision taken by the Council in this regard must take advantage of what we have already accomplished, consolidating the achievements made and moving decisively forward in protecting children and supporting national efforts to enact legislation that expressly prohibits the recruitment of minors by armed forces and armed groups and the direct participation of children in hostilities.

There are many concrete and effective actions that we must take against those parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children. That is why we must step

up our joint efforts, because it is clear that no one can resolve this sad situation alone; it must be done with the full and comprehensive support of the international community.

Lastly, we would urge that the reports of peacekeeping operations include follow-up to Security Council resolutions such as 1612 (2005) dealing with children and armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): I am personally happy, Sir, to see you presiding over this important discussion in the Security Council. My delegation welcomes this debate on the issue of children and armed conflict, and I thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her presentation this morning.

Sri Lanka, as a party to all seven core United Nations human rights conventions and several related protocols, has taken the necessary legislative, executive and judicial measures to promote the rights of children and their welfare. The Government follows a cooperative approach with respect to all United Nations human rights mechanisms and has accordingly subjected itself to constant scrutiny by treaty bodies and United Nations mechanisms. In addition, Sri Lanka is committed to a policy of zero tolerance on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. That policy has found constant reflection in our contributions to the work of several United Nations bodies on subjects ranging from human rights to disarmament and international terrorism to organized crime.

Ever since it was discovered that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) armed group was engaged in the recruitment and use of children in battle, Sri Lanka has not only voiced concern but has taken every possible action to persuade the LTTE to cease that deplorable practice. The LTTE has been designated as a terrorist group by many States, including those of the European Union, and has been identified continuously for several years in reports of the Secretary-General as a recruiter of children for armed conflict. Nevertheless, despite international condemnation, the LTTE continues to disobey and disregard its commitments to demobilize children and to cease the recruitment of children. Therefore, the time has come for the Security Council to seriously

consider targeted punitive action against repeat offenders such as the LTTE.

It is imperative that we keep our attention focused firmly on preventing the use and recruitment of children as soldiers. In that context, my delegation has studied carefully the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, including its recommendations. We note that several aspects of the report relating to issues such as development and humanitarian access could be considered by the relevant bodies of the United Nations mandated to address those issues, so that we do not lose focus on our core issue of concern.

In his first recommendation, the Secretary-General suggests that the Security Council expand its focus and give equal weight to all categories of violations against children. However, my delegation supports the position reflected in all resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on this subject, which specifically identify the "recruitment and use of children in armed conflict" as the first category, while referring to other categories of violations as "other violations and abuses". Understandably, this specific priority focus on "the recruitment and use of children" is due to its grave and far-reaching implications for international peace and security, which is the main responsibility of the Security Council and the reason why this issue was included in its agenda. The Council must therefore continue to maintain its focus on this issue in order to ensure that the important issue of child soldiers and related abuses receives undiminished attention, with a view to taking definitive action.

The report also contains an erroneous observation. In paragraph 117, it is stated that Sri Lanka is among "the seven situations that were designated as priorities for the first phase of implementation". In this regard, we would like to reiterate that our decision to be considered first was voluntary and not intended to change the order of chronological precedence or the timeline set by resolution 1612 (2005), which requires addressing the situations listed in annex I before considering those listed in annex II. It was the voluntary nature of the scrutiny provided for in resolution 1612 (2005) for situations listed in annex II that prompted Sri Lanka to place itself in the programme of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and

take action to put in place the task force on monitoring and reporting in a timely manner.

Let me recall that resolution 1612 (2005) requested that an independent review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism be submitted to the Security Council by 31 July 2006. However, in paragraph 116 of his report, the Secretary-General states that he has "requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services to carry out this independent review", that the "review is ongoing and key partners are fully cooperating with the exercise", and that he will "present the results of this review to the Security Council in November 2006".

At the same time, in paragraph 135 of his report, the Secretary-General recommends that the Security Council "expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern". My delegation wonders why the Secretary-General should make this recommendation to expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern in the absence of a timely review of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, as required by resolution 1612 (2005), or an explanation for the delay.

My delegation's view that we should concentrate more on consolidating the implementation of existing action plans and mechanisms than on making ambitious recommendations that cannot be implemented unless accompanied by the corresponding necessary technical, financial, and, above all, political support.

The report of the Secretary-General seems to assume that the review on the monitoring and reporting mechanism will be done in an administrative or managerial sense. However, several of the aspects involved in such a review go beyond the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. A meaningful review would require not just an assessment of the administrative effectiveness of the mechanism but also a focus on the gaps and overlaps in mechanisms and processes within the United Nations system, as well as the integrity of the system in general.

The Secretary-General also states, in paragraph 116, that "key partners are fully cooperating with the exercise". In our view, there would be no better partners than the affected States themselves in devising and implementing action plans and assisting in the review of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. When key stakeholders are not involved, serious lapses could occur in the outcomes that ensue, impeding the smooth implementation of the results of the review and

the decisions made. If strategic plans are developed by the United Nations in the framework of the agenda on children and armed conflict in consultation with all stakeholders, in particular affected States, that will doubt increase confidence in the ability of the United Nations to effectively address issues of concern.

My delegation therefore calls for greater dialogue between the Secretary-General and concerned Member States in the preparation of programmes and policies relating to children and armed conflict and for the involvement of concerned Member States in all processes and mechanisms for the implementation of such programmes and policies. "Megaphone advocacy", on the other hand, will hardly help to curb and eradicate the menace of child recruitment and abuse during armed conflict. Moreover, unbridled expansion of the mandate could dilute the attention paid to the core issue of concern, that is, the recruitment of children as soldiers. Sri Lanka, as an affected State, appeals to all concerned not to miss the wood for the trees.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report. We note the work of, and the information provided by, United Nations country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams. Such mechanisms, using all available resources, will enable us to arrive at an accurate and balanced picture of what is happening on the ground.

Indonesia is fully committed to facilitating the implementation of the various Security Council resolutions aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict situations. We firmly believe that children should be arming themselves with education and the necessary social skills so that they can become productive members of stable, peaceful well-governed developing societies.

While it is true that the Secretary-General's report inspires some sense of hope for betterment in the future, there are current matters that demand immediate attention. One such matter is the continued availability of small arms and light weapons, which enables the recruitment of child soldiers. Access to such arms should be severely curtailed.

Another issue of concern is the plight of children caught up in conflict situations in the Middle East — as exemplified by what recently occurred in Lebanon, where a greater number of children were killed than combatants. We believe that the Security Council should react in an urgent manner to prevent the loss of life of children in that region. In particular, action is necessary to protect the lives of children who are victims of the unresolved Palestinian problem, which is at the heart of the ongoing Middle East crisis.

Apart from those known challenges, the Secretary-General's report also draws our attention to emerging situations that are giving cause for great concern. We are now faced with the painful reality of combatants crossing borders to recruit and use children in armed conflicts. We are also hearing of new centres of recruitment by illegal armed groups, in several regions. More detailed information should be forthcoming about those situations so that appropriate action can be taken early to deal with them.

Because of the many dimensions of the challenge created by children's involvement in armed conflict, initiatives must be taken simultaneously on several fronts to ensure that consistent progress is made in solving the problem. In addition to involving the Peacebuilding Commission in the process of preventing the recruitment of child soldiers, it is also essential to encourage State adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a means of eliminating that practice. It would be equally helpful for appropriate national legislation to be enacted prohibiting recruitment, thereby shielding children at risk.

Indonesia is pleased that the United Nations has developed and is implementing a comprehensive strategy to build strong discipline among all categories of its peacekeeping personnel, and that troop-contributing countries are also being mobilized to help deal with the problem of child sexual exploitation and abuse. That will serve to curb the occurrence of that hideous practice. It is imperative that peacekeepers uphold the trust that local populations and the international community have placed in them.

My delegation notes with concern the recommendation that the Security Council should consider expanding its focus to include all categories of grave violations against children in armed conflict. It is our strong belief that such consideration should

involve the wider participation of Member States. That would increase sensitivity to the issue and strengthen commitment in that regard.

The continued protection of vulnerable children will require adequate, sustained and reliable funding. Without funding, the long-term sustainability and success of current initiatives are put at grave risk. For the sake of the children whose lives are being disrupted by unscrupulous individuals, it is vital that adequate resources and funding be available to all stakeholders involved in combating that practice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada welcomes both this open debate and the 2006 annual report (S/2006/826) of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

Today is an opportunity once again for the Council to focus on the severity of continued acts of violence against children in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Council has a central role to play in protecting children who suffer from the horrific effects of armed conflict and in holding accountable those responsible for the atrocities committed against them.

The date of 9 November 2006 was a historic day. It was the start of the International Criminal Court (ICC) trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the former militia leader from the Democratic Republic of the Congo charged with recruiting children. Canada welcomes this important first step in combating impunity. We call upon the international community to support the work of the ICC and national courts as they bring to justice those who perpetrate serious international crimes, including those committed against children.

Of the 38 violators identified in the Secretary-General's report as recruiting and using child soldiers, 16 have been listed in all reports since 2002. In order to end this culture of impunity, it is essential that the Security Council apply targeted measures against those persistent violators.

The recommendations of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (see S/2006/724) with respect to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2006/389) are a

good example of both cooperative measures and targeted sanctions. The challenge now is for the Council to turn clear recommendations — such as strengthening the child protection framework of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — into action. Canada calls upon the Council, in the form of the Group of Experts and the Sanctions Committee, to implement the sanctions recommended, including conducting expert-level missions to assess progress.

Canada commends the Working Group for meeting an ambitious agenda. In addition to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conclusions on the Sudan have also been adopted. The situations in Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi have been considered, and will soon be followed by those in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Somalia. The Special Representative's Special Adviser on Sri Lanka has reported that serious abuses against children are ongoing in that country. We encourage the Council to remain apprised of the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka and to pursue recommended action on the Sudan to combat impunity there.

Canada applauds the work of the Secretary-General and his team, in particular his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, for the wealth of reporting done on children and armed conflict over the past year. The Secretary-General's 2006 report recognizes some progress over the past year, in particular in Uganda, where the hope for peace has led to a decrease in abductions and "night commuters". However, there are many situations that have deteriorated, and new ones reported.

In particular, sexual violence against girls is still widely reported by the Secretary-General. Further progress will require the sustained attention of the international community, comprehensive and effective reporting and concrete responses by the Council that protect affected populations in a sustainable way.

Canada congratulates UNICEF and the United Nations country teams for their efforts in the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in seven initial countries. It is critical that the Working Group continue to focus on the establishment of monitoring and reporting in all situations of concern and that it extend the mandate of the mechanism to include all six categories of grave

violations against children beyond their recruitment and use as soldiers.

(spoke in French)

We also eagerly look forward to the comprehensive assessment of child protection advisers in peace operations; their contributions have been useful in monitoring and reporting efforts and in combating sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel.

Although the Council has on three occasions requested the development of action plans by parties recruiting and using child soldiers, those requests have been heeded only by Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda. Canada calls for full implementation of commitments under those plans to ensure that no child is part of a fighting force. With regard to all the other parties listed in this year's report, it would be advisable for them to draw on the lessons learned in Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda. Of course, we also call on them to establish their own time-bound action plans to end the recruitment of child soldiers.

Efforts to address protection needs on the ground must be mutually reinforcing. We should not utilize the Council solely to express our concerns. States, including members of the Security Council, must demonstrate their willingness to ensure that populations at risk always have access to the fullest protection possible. In so doing, we must hold those responsible accountable for their actions and ensure that the defence of rights, monitoring and the strengthening of capacities become the bywords of our activities. In short, our multilateralism must bring concrete results.

The President *(spoke in Spanish):* I give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening the open debate today. It is most timely. I appreciate the useful information provided by the Special-Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman.

We are pleased to note that steady progress has been made in establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the seven situations designated as priorities. The first phase of implementation has highlighted the importance of working closely among

involved parties — the national Governments, relevant United Nations actors and other partners — for the successful operationalization of the mechanism.

This morning, a delegation made unfounded allegations with regard to the use of child soldiers in my country and by my Government. The source of those allegations, including the preposterous figure of 90,000 child soldiers, comes from exiles and remnants of insurgents. Needless to say, those allegations are completely untrue. The Council has first-hand experience that information coming from exiles is completely unreliable. Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to apprise the Council of the concrete steps taken by my Government to prevent the use of child soldiers.

I wish to reiterate here that the Myanmar armed forces are an all-volunteer army. As stipulated by the Myanmar Defence Service Act and War Office Council directives, Myanmar does not recruit persons under 18 years of age into the military. When new recruits are found to be underage, they are discharged from the military.

To effectively implement those rules and regulations, a High-Level Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children was established in January 2004. The establishment of the High-Level Committee has contributed to stricter enforcement of the recruitment criteria. Furthermore, the discharging of underage children who have been in service for years has become more pronounced with the launching of a plan of action.

There have been further developments in the implementation of the prevention of military recruitment of underage children in Myanmar following the open debate in July. Education and public awareness activities have been extensively carried out. Members of the High-Level Committee have crisscrossed the country and conducted hundreds of seminars and education campaigns, with the full participation of community elders and various social organizations. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF visited Myanmar in August 2006. During his meeting with the First Secretary of the State Peace and Development Council, matters related to the protection of children — including the efforts of the Government to prevent the recruitment of underage children into the military — were discussed. The Deputy Executive

Director was invited to inspect the military recruitment centres. However, because of time constraints, he was not able to take up the offer.

Following his visit, the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme and the UNICEF representative, together with the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross office in Mandalay, visited the military recruitment centre in Mandalay on 25 October. During the visit, they also talked freely with new recruits in the recruitment centre. Subsequently, the UNICEF representative wrote a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and expressed his belief that “the recruitment procedure has been fully implemented”.

I have met the Special Representative of the Secretary-General a number of times and have kept her abreast of the efforts of my Government to prevent the recruitment of underage children, including the names and identity numbers of underage children discharged from the military. More recently, I have provided the Special Representative with photographic records of newly recruited underage children who had been discharged from the military service since May.

Despite all the information provided by the national Government, as well as the United Nations country team in Myanmar, the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict contains little or no mention of the concrete actions of my Government. It continues to lack accuracy and objectivity and to include unfounded allegations.

I wish to inform Council members that Myanmar, as stated by Under-Secretary-General Gambari to this Council in September, is no longer in a situation of armed conflict. The Government is making all-out efforts to prevent the use of child soldiers.

We are of the view that national Governments and the United Nations must work closely together to address the important issue of protecting children. In that regard, we would like to stress that all the parties involved, including the United Nations agencies, must strictly observe and adhere to the provisions of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), with special emphasis on operative paragraphs 2 (c) and (d). I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and the concerned Government on matters related to the monitoring and reporting mechanism by United

Nations entities in their contact with non-State armed groups.

I wish to reaffirm the political will of the Government of Myanmar to prevent the military recruitment of underage children. We have also set up the necessary national mechanism and will steadfastly implement it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia welcomes the ongoing focus of the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict. We are grateful for the opportunity provided by this open debate to highlight our concern regarding the impact of armed conflict on children around the world.

We are encouraged by the report of the Secretary-General on this issue, the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism and, in support of a framework of compliance, the development and implementation of time-bound action plans. Those efforts reflect the progress made since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and represent concrete steps to improve the security and rights of children affected by armed conflict.

We encourage efforts to sustain the momentum and progress achieved to date as we move from the first phase of implementation of that important resolution. Central to that is the effective operation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and we encourage full cooperation with United Nations and other humanitarian personnel as they undertake the collection and verification of information on recruitment practices and other grave violations against children. Their safe and unhindered access is paramount to the ongoing implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), but is a common impediment cited in the Secretary-General's report.

Situations of armed conflict give rise to a number of grave violations against children, not only through their recruitment as soldiers, including that undertaken by terrorist organizations, but also at the hands of those who take advantage of their extreme vulnerability.

In that vein, we agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that equal weight should be given to all categories of grave violations. No hierarchy can be ascribed to the violations suffered by children in times of armed conflict. Physical abuse,

sexual abuse, attacks upon schools, abductions and the denial of access to humanitarian assistance all represent grave violations of children's rights that deserve and demand the attention and response of the international community. Such violations also leave a lasting imprint on health and psychological well-being, with untold consequences for a child's future.

No individuals or groups can be outside the law. Against that background, we note the laying of charges against one individual by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, regarding the enlisting and conscripting of children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities. This case, which is currently in a pre-trial hearing phase, is a landmark in the fight against impunity for these crimes. This important step builds upon jurisprudence of other international criminal tribunals such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which confirmed in 2004 that the recruitment of child soldiers has for some time entailed individual criminal responsibility. Australia welcomes these developments in international law which highlight the plight of children forced to fight adult wars and which further the fight against impunity.

Australia is supporting a number of measures to mitigate the impact of conflict on children in the Asia-Pacific region. In the northern and eastern conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka we are supporting UNICEF's efforts to prevent and respond to all forms of conflict-related violence with activities including psychosocial care, community-based protection and recruitment-prevention efforts. In East Timor, we have provided financial support for child protection officers to work in camps for internally displaced persons to ensure the safety, security and well-being of children displaced as a result of the recent conflict. In the southern region of Mindanao in the Philippines, Australian funding to UNICEF is assisting conflict-affected communities to ensure their children have access to immunization, education and protection. We commend the role of UNICEF in these and other similar situations to ensure that children's rights are upheld both in principle and in practice and that the physical and emotional needs of children affected by armed conflict are met.

Australia also supports calls by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to look beyond "band-aid" solutions to long-term development responses that

comprehensively address the critical reintegration and rehabilitation needs of children affected by armed conflict. We thank the Special Representative for her leadership and commitment.

On a positive note, I am pleased to report to the Security Council that, following Australia's deposit of its instrument of ratification, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict entered into force in Australia on 26 October 2006. This highlights the Australian Government's continuing commitment not only to the promotion and protection of children's rights in this area but also to the broader objectives of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the gravity with which we view violations of the Convention.

As a prosperous and vigorous democracy, Australia is recognized for the protections it affords children through its laws and institutions. At the international level, we are also strongly committed to efforts aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of children. We call upon States to make serious efforts to report in detail violations of children's rights and to implement action plans, as outlined in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The efforts of States will determine the success of these measures in preventing the abuse of children and in alleviating their suffering during times of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): I would like to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on Peru's presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation thanks the Council for holding this open debate on children and armed conflict and thanks the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the report on the subject (S/2006/826). We also commend the United Nations, including UNICEF, for the valuable role it has been playing in this field.

Women and children are the most vulnerable groups in armed conflicts in many parts of the world. In view of the grave situation and plight of children in many complex situations that persist today, the Security Council has rightly included the matter on its agenda.

My delegation has been closely following the developments taking place in the deliberations held by the Security Council in recent years, including the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), the establishment by the Secretary-General of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the setting up of a Working Group of the Security Council in this context. However, we need further careful consideration with regard to the results achieved so far on the implementation of the monitoring mechanism in the field, which is supposed to enhance national capacity for alleviating the plight of children and improving their living conditions.

The report of the Secretary-General contains some specific references with regard to children and armed conflict in Nepal. There is no denying the fact that, as elsewhere, children in Nepal have suffered greatly in over a decade of armed conflict. However, since the establishment of the democratic Government after the successful People's Movement last April and the signing of peace agreements, the situation has changed to a remarkable degree. The signing of the comprehensive peace accord on 21 November 2006 has put an end to the decade-old armed conflict in Nepal, paving way for Constituent Assembly elections by mid-June 2007.

The comprehensive peace accord has also given rise to opportunities for lasting peace and stability, the rule of law, multiparty democracy and the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in our country. The Government firmly believes that its efforts for lasting peace will help in bringing about improvements in the overall situation of all sections of society, including children, women and the elderly, which are the vulnerable groups most affected by armed conflict.

Among other things, the comprehensive peace accord provides for special protection of the rights of children from all forms of violation. It also includes a provision not to conscript or use in the armed forces children aged 18 or below. It also provides that children thus affected shall be rescued immediately and that appropriate assistance, as may be needed, shall be provided for their rehabilitation. Implementation of these agreements will definitely create better conditions for the protection and welfare of children in our country.

In accordance with these agreements, Nepal has sought the continued assistance of the United Nations, including in the area of human rights monitoring. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal has been playing a commendable role in the protection of human rights, including those of children. We hope the United Nations will be able to provide necessary assistance, as requested by Nepal, as quickly as possible in order to support the momentum of the home-grown peace process and to advance national efforts towards lasting peace in our country.

Nepal is fully committed to protecting and promoting the rights of children. Recruitment of children for military service is prohibited by law. Any activity related to that would be considered a crime punishable by law. The Government is also fully committed to the reintegration of separated children and child soldiers into their families and their society by providing them with education and other services.

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I take this opportunity to reiterate Nepal's full commitment to the protection of children and the promotion of their rights and development in all circumstances. As a party to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nepal adheres to all its international obligations in this regard. Nepal welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation that adequate resources and funding be made available to national Governments, the United Nations and partners for the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces.

We have observed that the Secretary-General's report contains certain recommendations which could ideally be taken up by other relevant treaty bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations, and not by the Security Council itself. Thus, in conclusion, we underline the need for greater coherent and coordinated efforts by the relevant bodies and agencies of the United Nations towards enhancing the national capacity of the countries concerned for protecting and promoting the rights of children around world, including in post-conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I would be remiss were I to begin without applauding Peru's skilful stewardship of the Council's proceedings. We

thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/826) on children and armed conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). We welcome the assumption of the office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy in April 2006 and her excellent presentation this morning.

We are heartened that the implementation and monitoring mechanism is in place. We appreciate the fact that the process included close collaboration with the key stakeholders. It is our hope that the time-bound action plans to prevent and end violations will be fully implemented in all situations of concern.

Children remain most vulnerable in conflicts; they are always the worst sufferers. In peace processes, they are mostly ignored. To protect them from war and conflict is our collective responsibility. We need to seize the momentum of ongoing consensus in the children and armed conflict agenda.

To usher in an era of application of international child protection standards, the Council must urge Governments and non-State actors to respect and uphold those standards. The Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 and the Landmines Convention are all relevant in this context. It is now time for the Council to expand its focus. This should include all categories of grave violations beyond recruitment and use of child soldiers, such as the killing and maiming of children, sexual and other grave acts of violence and denial of humanitarian access.

Violence against children is usually further exacerbated in situations of foreign occupation. We are concerned at the fresh incidents involving children in the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon and in the occupied Palestinian territories. Preventive measures and concrete actions need to be urgently taken to extend them fullest protection.

As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Bangladesh will remain ever vigilant in respect of the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005). It is important to encourage United Nations agencies and international financial institutions to devote particular attention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Basic services like education, health care and housing should be provided. The involvement of local communities is

crucial for imparting a sense of ownership and long-term sustainability. Technical and financial assistance need to be provided to countries, regions and subregional organizations that are involved in peacebuilding. We urge donors to continue their generosity in this endeavour.

We believe that protection of children, particularly girls, from gender-based violence and abuse is a primary and enduring responsibility. High priority must be provided to the special needs and particular vulnerabilities of girls affected by armed conflict. There should be zero tolerance for the perpetrators of violence, particularly vis-à-vis girls; there should be absolutely no immunity in that regard.

Finally, we have to avoid the perpetuation of cyclical violence. To prevent today's victims from becoming tomorrow's perpetrators, the values of a culture of peace must be inculcated in young and old alike. It is from this perspective that the Bangladeshi delegation every year tables in the General Assembly a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010". It is our fervent hope that this year too, as in other years, the international community and the United Nations membership will provide it full support.

Peace education and programmes, as well as other non-violent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, will help us reach our goals. Robust pursuit of these aims may change the course of history. It will most certainly alter the future of the child today and, therefore, of the men and women tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to join the other members in congratulating you, Sir, representing the sister Republic of Peru, for your wise stewardship as President of the Security Council, and to acknowledge the importance of bringing to the Council this topic — children and armed conflict — in compliance with mandates, but above all with the precepts established in our Charter to preserve present and future generations from the scourge of war.

We greatly appreciate the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/826), as well as that of his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, who is

doing excellent work. We warmly congratulate her. We would also like to express our thanks for the reports of the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of Save the Children, who eloquently recounted a few situations and, generally speaking, made important recommendations. My delegation supports these recommendations, not only in their design, but also fundamentally with respect to developing relevant and effective programmatic action that reinforces the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for children, ensuring long-term sustainability and the success of such interventions.

We are pleased to note that the Council in the past decade has placed priority on the defence and promotion of the rights of the child, in particular those affected by armed conflict.

The structure established by the Council in resolution 1612 (2005) has made it possible to set up a legal framework that marks a significant step forward in finding a solution to such a complex problem and complements existing international legal machinery. I would like to point out a few of the most important instruments: the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, as well as the Statute of the International Criminal Court, to mention a few.

We are pleased by the establishment in resolution 1612 (2005) of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the participation of children in armed conflict, as well as by the encouragement to set up coordination among the various specialized agencies of the United Nations system, giving UNICEF an important role in these activities.

In our opinion, this will strengthen and guarantee an effective protection policy for those beings whose smiles are being marked by the fatal tragedy of violence. It will also revive hopes for a new, different and just world and also for the development of our youth. Perhaps we will manage to eliminate, once and for all, a scourge that threatens all of us equally to different degrees on some occasions or in different circumstances, with children sometimes being the weakest link in many of our marginalized areas.

Socio-economic realities expose them to an environment of street violence whose reality is perhaps harsher than what we see in a conventional armed

conflict. We do subscribe to the further expansion of the range of information that we are trying to obtain in order to analyse how we can contribute to resolving this problem.

Honduras would like to see a world of peace, security and the peaceful settlement of disputes in applying international law. We hope to see smiles, dreams, education and a better future for the children of our world with the effective enforcement of the fundamental rights of all humans, which we must respect and promote in any part of the world. To conclude, the smiles and the dreams of children cannot be eliminated by the criminal use of guns.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Norway to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Today's debate is a welcome opportunity to focus our attention on the need for a wider international partnership to better protect children affected by armed conflict. Children are the most vulnerable victims of any conflict. They deserve our attention and our protection. Their rights must be respected and their central role in peace and security must be recognized.

We fully support efforts to further integrate the problem of children and armed conflict in the peace and security sector of the United Nations and the work of the Security Council. We must also pay attention to emerging challenges and new threats, as suggested by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in her strategic framework. Norway stands ready to support her in this and in her mission in general.

Norway welcomes the more comprehensive framework of the Council in dealing with the problem of children and armed conflict in line with resolution 1612 (2005) and its previous resolutions. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has committed itself to a work plan that includes consideration of specific situations and regular reviews of all situations of concern. The ministerial meeting called by France earlier this year could serve as a model for ensuring continuous engagement by all stakeholders.

Another significant development relates to the system of monitoring and reporting on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as on other violations and abuses committed against children in armed

conflict. Information should be provided on the practices of all parties to armed conflicts — including Government forces, paramilitary groups and non-State armed groups.

Civil society and NGOs can play an important role in the monitoring and reporting system. Norway has already provided support to the monitoring and reporting system through UNICEF. Norway encourages a broad approach to monitoring and reporting. We support the suggestion of the Secretary-General that the Council expand its focus and give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflicts in all situations of concern. This includes all the categories of grave violations beyond the recruitment and use of child soldiers as set out in resolution 1612 (2005).

Regrettably, the creation and implementation of action plans by countries to end the practice of forced recruitment and use of child soldiers is lagging behind. We need to see more effective use of action plans. While we are pleased to note that several countries have expressed their commitment to developing such plans, we also join in the call for those listed in the report to follow up with concrete time-bound action plans. As a member of the international community Norway stands ready to consider ways of support.

We have witnessed serious setbacks affecting the civilian population, including children in the Middle East region. Civilians are affected by cluster munitions, not only during conflict but also for a long time afterwards. We must prevent cluster munitions from becoming the humanitarian scourge that anti-personnel landmines were before the Mine Ban Convention. With that in mind, my Government has launched an international initiative to ban cluster munitions.

There is reason for cautious optimism in countries such as Uganda and Nepal. Norway welcomes the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda. We hope that will become a sustainable peace agreement that can put an end to the suffering of large numbers of boys and girls abducted and recruited as child soldiers. We call on the LRA to release all women and children in captivity in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1325 (2000).

Norway has warmly welcomed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nepal. According to the Peace Agreement, cantonment of armed

personnel will soon be initiated. Children under 18 years of age will be separated and transferred to transit centres. UNICEF in Nepal, as lead agency in addressing issues of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, has already signalled its readiness to assist. Norway stands ready to assist UNICEF in that endeavour.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Israel, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): At the outset, allow me to express our gratitude to you, Sir, for your able stewardship of the Council this month and to commend you for convening this debate. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her report and her important efforts, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for her work.

As Israel assigns high priority to the protection of children, we read with interest the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/826), and are encouraged by the efforts of the Security Council, its Working Group, the Secretary-General and his staff. Israel supports international initiatives in this arena, including the adoption of the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Protocol. To this end, we also invited Ms. Coomaraswamy to visit our country, and we look forward to that visit soon.

Across the globe, children are being recruited to join roving militias, armed gangs and terrorist groups. In our region, we have seen the recruitment of children for terror attacks and violence, including but not limited to suicide bombings. We have seen the cruel exploitation of children as human shields. And we have seen the transformation of children's bedrooms into bomb-making factories, schools into weapons storehouses and kindergartens into terrorist safe houses. To combat that disturbing phenomenon, more attention must be paid to the incitement and provocation by communal and political leaders in our region as a whole, including in the Palestinian Authority.

Youth are extremely impressionable. They are susceptible to brainwashing by individuals of popularity, and indoctrination by the hateful materials found in the textbooks used in our region. Those forms of incitement are the most harmful, as they pervert the value and worth of education. In order to truly protect

children, we must understand the educational consequences of incitement. Hence, it is with regret that we note that the severity of that issue was not reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. The incitement of children is no less dangerous than terrorism. It nurtures an infrastructure of hate and poisons the life stream of society. We hope more attention will be given to that pressing issue in the future.

Similarly, we regret that the report omits reference to the fact that children have actually been recruited by Palestinian terrorists to carry out attacks. This is a reality we face and it has been documented both by Israel and by human rights groups. We hope this reality is given attention by the Council and in future reports.

This year has been an especially difficult one for the children in our region, caught in the crossfire of vicious armed conflict and between currents of extremism and hate. Terrorist attacks in the north by Hizbullah and in the south by Palestinian terrorists have blanketed civilian life in Israel since early this summer.

While children in Israel's north have gone on to rebuild their lives, children in Israel's south continue to suffer from Palestinian terror. The situation became so grave that recently thousands of children were evacuated from their homes in Sderot. The psychological toll that terrorism has levied on children is only beginning to be understood. Just this morning, we learned that record numbers of teenaged students in the north of Israel have dropped out of school owing to post-traumatic stress. In the south, parents and medical health professionals are seeing exceptionally high levels of anxiety and fear among children, many of them showing signs of trauma and regression such as bed-wetting and nightmares. Some children cannot even remember what life was like before the Qassam rockets.

It is important to recall that no one has a monopoly on victim status. The suffering of all children — and I emphasize, all children: Lebanese, Israeli and Palestinian children — must be acknowledged. Denying the suffering of one side undermines the prospects for mutual understanding and tolerance.

Unfortunately, in this world body over the past month, we have seen exactly that: a willingness to

ignore one side of suffering and to adopt one-sided resolutions. The resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly politicized tragic human suffering, projected a one-sided version of history and distorted reality. Those resolutions turned suffering children into political pawns to increase criticism of Israel, while ignoring reality on the ground and the source of terror.

I would like to take just a moment to note that Israel finds the statement, made during today's deliberations, that more children than combatants were killed during this summer's conflict in Lebanon — and I suppose that those statements meant terrorists — to be highly troubling and questionable. I am unaware of the source of the data cited, but what I do know is that Hizbollah, by firing weapons from civilian areas and using civilians as human shields, deliberately distorted the distinction between civilian and terrorist. They attempted to escape retaliation and avoid responsibility for their terror. The obscurity surrounding the number of civilians and terrorists killed merely confirms that tactic. While the death of every innocent civilian — adult and child alike — in time of war is a real tragedy, the specific statement that we heard today could lead to conclusions that are clearly problematic.

The ceasefire agreed upon two days ago in our region is a sign of promise, a promise of peace and hope for us and for our children — all children. But more must be done. We must see to it that the tensions underlying this conflict, the hatred and incitement, and Hamas's disregard for its internationally accepted obligations — to recognize Israel, to renounce violence and terror and to abide by previous agreements — are addressed.

Israel awaits a genuine Palestinian partner that desires peace. Indeed, our region has had a difficult few months. But the past cannot be changed, and the victims on all sides of the conflict cannot be returned. What remains is the course that we chart together to prevent further tragedies and to bestow a legacy on the next generation. If we do so, we can transform animosity into amity and embark together — not in the distant future, but in our day — on the path of mutual recognition, respect and direct dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Egypt, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826), which was submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). We also thank Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for their insightful presentations today. In addition, we thank the Security Council for its efforts, in cooperation with the relevant United Nations bodies, to put an end to the suffering of children in armed conflict, as well as violations and exploitation perpetrated by parties to conflicts.

Despite the fact that the report acknowledges the escalation of violence against children in the Middle East, including in Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, which has resulted in thousands of child victims, mostly as a result of the ceaseless Israeli aggression against Lebanon and Palestine, the report makes no reference to any measure taken by the United Nations to put an end to that shameful situation. To the contrary, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has not yet had the opportunity to visit Lebanon and Israel to assess the situation on the ground and to submit a report to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. Moreover, no monitoring and reporting mechanism has been established to monitor the deteriorating situation there. In contrast, such mechanisms have been established to follow up on progress made in the seven other designated conflict areas, despite the fact that the situations in Palestine and Lebanon figure on the Security Council's agenda. Those two situations are no less important than other conflict situations for which the Council has established monitoring and reporting mechanisms, although they are not included on its agenda and are thus outside the Council's purview, such as the situations in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Therefore, Egypt stresses the need to give a broad mandate to the fact-finding mission to be sent to the Palestinian territory pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/ES-10/16 — which was adopted at the Assembly's tenth emergency special session after the Security Council had failed to take action in that regard — to prepare a detailed report on violence against Palestinian children and to determine Israel's responsibility for the situation. We also call on the Secretary-General to send his Special Representative to

Lebanon on an urgent mission to report on the deteriorating situation of Lebanese children as a result of the most recent Israeli military aggression. We look forward to receiving detailed information on both important situations in the next report on children and armed conflict.

Furthermore, it is urgent that the United Nations play a significant role in dealing with the ever-growing number of Iraqi child victims, regardless of whether they have been victimized as a result of sectarian violence or of excesses by the multinational force, whose mandate is regularly extended by the Security Council. Accordingly, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should undertake a field mission to Iraq to identify the causes underlying the deteriorating situation of children there and prepare a separate report on that subject. In addition, a special mechanism should be established to ensure that the multinational force abides by the same code of conduct and moral standards that apply to United Nations peacekeeping missions, particularly in dealing with children and combating their sexual exploitation, abuse, killing or maiming and all other forms of violence against them, as detailed in section C of the report. That section should be expanded to ensure that the multinational force bears responsibility for all violations its personnel commit against children in Iraq.

With regard to the preparation and implementation of action plans to put an end to the violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict, which is addressed in part VI of the report, Egypt would like to stress that the preparation of such plans should not be left up to the parties concerned, because that makes implementation a voluntary matter, undermines the comprehensive approach required for the implementation of such plans and fails to attain the desired objectives. In that regard, despite our appreciation for the achievements accomplished with regard to the situations in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda, we must note that the report before us does not refer to any effective efforts to implement action plans in Liberia, Myanmar, Palestine or Lebanon and other areas. That raises questions as to the criteria used for selecting situations to be addressed.

Here, Egypt would like to highlight the close link between the elaboration by the United Nations of effective action plans for conflicts, on the one hand,

and achieving comprehensive political settlements for those conflicts, on the other, particularly in situations involving child exploitation. For the Security Council to ignore the need to achieve a political settlement, to the extent of using the veto power against draft resolutions calling on parties to achieve political settlements, while the United Nations is at the same time asking those parties to draw up action plans to protect children, is a contradictory and ineffective action that defies sound logic. The Security Council should not proclaim itself the only player and as solely responsible for children in armed conflict. The report deals with situations that should be dealt with by the General Assembly and its Third Committee, not the Security Council, since such situations are not on the agenda of the Council and do not constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Finally, Egypt agrees with the assessment contained in part VII of the report, on the role and activities of the child protection advisers, especially the ideas expressed in paragraph 132 on proposals to improve their work with the aim of protecting children in situations of armed conflict, including by adopting effective policies supported by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and including them in all peacekeeping mandates.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Benin, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): The Government of Benin would like to express its deep appreciation to you, Sir, for the very admirable way in which your delegation has been guiding the work of the Security Council during this month. We are grateful to you for having organized this public meeting on the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and for the special cachet that your Minister conferred on it by presiding.

I would also like to welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and to thank her for her dedication to the cause of children in conflict situations.

Benin made this question one of the priorities of its term on the Security Council in 2004 and 2005. In this regard, the support of all Council members for the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and for the Working Group responsible for examining its reports made possible the adoption of

resolution 1612 (2005), sponsored by Benin and France.

We are pleased to note from our thorough reading of the Secretary-General's report that the Security Council and the Secretariat, as well as the programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations, in particular UNICEF, have worked in concert with Member States and non-governmental organizations such as Save the Children and Oxfam to make the mechanism operational and to run the Working Group effectively. We note with concern the risks taken by mechanism personnel in the field to gain access to conflict zones. The parties concerned have a duty to ensure access to children who are victims and not to block the efforts by the international community for their protection.

The continuing violation of the norms of mankind in armed conflicts distresses us greatly, especially with regard to the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General and the complexity of the horrible practices of which children are the victim. The international community must therefore become organized, bringing into its ambit all actors who could make a contribution to providing better protection for children. The mechanism must rely more on civil society in the countries concerned, in addition to sending advisers on the protection of children.

The comprehensive nature of this issue means that we must transcend the limits on Security Council intervention. Benin believes that the Council must pay equal attention to all of the countries concerned and to all forms of violations of the rights of children in conflict situations. We are, however, grateful to those countries that have voluntarily cooperated with the Council Working Group; that is entirely to their credit. For the sake of the smooth operation of the mechanism, and given the gravity of the facts described in the report of the Secretary-General, the Council cannot continue to be dependent on the goodwill of countries that are not on its agenda.

We therefore call on Council members to interpret the resolution in a positive manner in order to ensure the more effective protection of children in situations of conflict by recognizing the universal and comprehensive purpose of the mechanism. The Working Group should draw up its programme of work for 2007 on that basis. It should examine all reports produced by the mechanism and take appropriate

measures to ensure effective protection of the children concerned.

The action plans for parties to armed conflict called for in resolution 1539 (2004) must be insisted upon in all the countries concerned. The parties must be held responsible for implementing them. Parties that submit action plans but do not implement them are just as much at fault as those that do not have such plans.

Prosecutions by the International Criminal Court should demonstrate to the parties the determination of the international community to put an end to impunity in this area. Therefore we are eagerly awaiting the completion of the procedures that have begun. We call on Governments to cooperate with the Court in the execution of arrest warrants in order to strengthen its credibility and its effectiveness as a deterrent.

We are pleased to see the positive developments that have taken place thanks to the pressure applied by the international community, in particular the ceasefire agreements obtained in number of countries. The United Nations should support that progress through assistance measures and support for peace processes already under way, because the return of peace is essential for the protection of children. In this context, it is of the greatest importance that the specific needs of children affected by conflict be taken into account in order to duly address the serious threats to their future and the future of their countries because of their unhappy experiences and the harm that they have suffered.

In the specific case of West Africa, borders are porous and children involved in a conflict in one country can bring about the destabilization of other countries because of their mobility and their recruitment into transborder organized crime, or even into non-State armed groups that serve interests detrimental to international peace and security.

The Council must educate the international community about the need to effectively and efficiently take charge of children who have been demobilized by the parties to a conflict. The establishment of reception, rehabilitation and social reintegration infrastructures and of programmes to manage them cannot be left up to the affected communities alone. The problems posed in this area must be taken up with all due attention through efforts to consolidate peace and assist refugees and displaced persons.

In conclusion, I should like to express my country's support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report calling for a comprehensive study of all related issues, especially those concerning the mobilization of human resources and funding, with a view to providing an appropriate response to the problem of children in situations of armed conflict, because such a response requires expertise and resources that are often lacking in their communities of origin.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. I should like also to convey my thanks to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for their presentations. We welcome the great efforts of the Secretary-General and thank him for his report on the question before the Security Council.

The report of the Secretary-General concerns the commitment to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in situations of armed conflict and contains information relating to the progress made by the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in resolution 1612 (2005). The report clearly reflects the anguish of the international community at the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict. It makes clear also the great responsibility of countries to take action to put an end to such suffering, in particular in cases where the parties concerned flout the basic principles of international humanitarian law and human rights principles, in particular those relating to the protection of children.

The statistics contained in UNICEF's 2006 report on the state of the world's children make clear the scope of the disaster facing developing countries. I will confine myself to saying that more than 250,000 children have been recruited into armed conflict; there are 140 million orphans in developing countries; more than 1 million children are being detained and are victims of physical or sexual violence; and more than 1.2 million children are being trafficked annually. Those figures are cited in the report I mentioned earlier.

In the context of information on compliance and on the progress made in situations of which the

Council is seized, the report mentions the situation in Iraq. It states that, in the light of the very difficult security situation, it is very hard to determine the number of children subjected to violence. We, too, share this conclusion.

The suffering of Iraqi children is due not only to the current acts of violence and terrorism, although they are more painful and brutal, but also to three decades of internal and external conflicts and wars, in addition to the impact of economic sanctions lasting more than 13 years. The current situation is especially serious given that Iraqi children have in some cases become the targets of terrorists and criminal groups. That development prompted the Security Council to adopt resolution 1618 (2005) condemning terrorist attacks in Iraq, including the appalling massacre of 32 children. Recently, the killing and abduction of children has become a means of inciting sectarian violence.

In any case, the serious threat facing Iraqi children at the present time is due to the vicious circle of violence and terrorism. There is no doubt that it is the responsibility of Iraq's national Government to tackle that threat, but the support and assistance of the international community are also indispensable. The mechanisms and criteria adopted by the Government of Iraq to protect children are internationally agreed ones, in particular as concerns the rights of children. Although the Iraqi Government and civil society institutions are endeavouring to make the rights of children a daily reality, the deteriorating security situation, terrorism and violence are making this very difficult. That is why political efforts should be focused on the necessity to stop the security situation from deteriorating further.

The Government, through the Prime Minister, has taken a political approach to national reconciliation and national dialogue. We have therefore established a national programme whose vision is based on improving the security situation through political harmony, thus improving things on all levels. The policy meetings of the Iraqi National Security Council held on 23 and 24 November supported that approach. The Prime Minister reaffirmed it on 26 November, when he stated that sectarian violence would end only when political actors realize that there will be neither winners nor losers in this war.

The international community, the United Nations and the friends and brothers of Iraq must offer greater support to the Iraqi Government in order to bring about national reconciliation, because it would be pointless to take up the question of the rights and the protection of Iraqi children given the current deterioration of the security situation. Improving the security situation would truly be the beginning of the end of the suffering of Iraqi children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Lebanon, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): Mr. President, at the outset I wish to congratulate you for having organized this important meeting. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for the report on children and armed conflict, and we look forward to her visit to the region in general and to Lebanon in particular, where we are sure that she will witness on the ground what I am going to share with the Council about the suffering of Lebanese children as a result of Israel's latest act of aggression this past summer.

While the facts and the realities on the ground have by now been well documented, the emotional, psychological and collective trauma is much more difficult to relay to Council members. The massacres that took place at Qana II, Marwaheen and Chiah are already etched in our history as another example of Israel's intentions towards our youth and our population. There were 360 child fatalities. Hundreds of children suffered permanent injuries and disabilities. Fifty schools were destroyed, with around 300 needing substantial repair. Primary health-care facilities in many parts of the country were annihilated. Water systems in southern Lebanon, the Beka'a Valley and southern Beirut were destroyed, thereby stranding at least 1.7 million people — 40 per cent of whom were children — without the basic means of hygiene.

These are but a few examples of the 32 vital points targeted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), including 109 destroyed bridges, 137 damaged roads, and severe damage to the oil reserves, causing one of the largest ecological disasters ever in the Mediterranean. With so much destruction, Lebanon must once again undergo the difficult task of recovery.

According to Israeli logic, Lebanese civilian infrastructure was deliberately targeted and its

designation was changed from civilian to military. The IDF argued that the infrastructure could hypothetically be used by Hizbollah. That twisted logic has not fooled anyone. Allow me to refer to some reports.

While analyzing the various aspects of the impact on life during this past summer's war on Lebanon, the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon concluded, in the advance unedited version of its report, that "the damage inflicted on some infrastructure was done for the sake of destruction". Yes, it was a simple attack for the sake of destruction. The report also accused Israel of not providing local civilians with effective warning, as required under international humanitarian law. One stark example was the massacre at Marwaheen on 15 July, in which 23 civilians, including 14 children, were bombed by sea and gunned down by air as they attempted to flee a conflict zone during the existence of a supposed "safe passage" corridor that the IDF had promised the local population.

The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2006/826) stated conclusively that

"Children in Lebanon were also denied access to humanitarian assistance owing to an Israeli military blockade of Lebanon's borders, seaports, bombing of roads and Beirut's airport." (para. 52)

Those acts, as we stated earlier, cannot be justified by any play on words or twisted logic. The tactics used by the IDF created a situation in which about 975,000 people, constituting approximately one quarter of the Lebanese population — with one-third of them being children — were displaced from their homes and attacked as they fled. They returned to find over 30,000 housing units destroyed and 1.2 million cluster bombs scattered and hidden, waiting to remind them of the trauma they had just survived.

Today, Lebanon's biggest challenge remains the removal of the 1.2 million cluster bombs that Israel left behind, including the location and removing of mines planted by Israel. According to the group Landmine Action and to Lebanese Government reports, three to four civilians are still being killed or maimed every day as a result of unexploded ordnance. Over 22 people have died and 135 have been injured since the cessation of hostilities, with 35 per cent of the victims being children. Cluster munitions have prevented the harvest of summer and fall crops in south Lebanon, a

region in which agriculture comprises about 70 per cent of the economy.

The claims by Major-General Benny Gantz of the IDF that those unreliable weapons can be used in a precise or surgical way were complete fabrications. So too was the statement by Ambassador Arkady Mil-Man, the Israeli Ambassador to Russia, who declared on 26 July that reports of the Israeli army using cluster munitions were obvious propaganda on the part of Hizbollah and other organizations that did not know what was actually going on.

A more accurate rendition of the events that took place can be summarized by an anonymous Israeli reservist, who was quoted in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper on 14 September 2006 as saying:

"In the last 72 hours we fired all the munitions we had, all at the same spot. We didn't even alter the direction of the gun. Friends of mine in the battalion told me they also fired everything."

In blunter terms than any of us could use, the head of an IDF rocket unit was quoted in the same newspaper on 22 November 2006 as saying: "What we did was insane and monstrous[;] we covered entire towns in cluster bombs". Again, no twist in logic can underscore the reality of those testimonies and the conclusions of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Last week, the Third Committee adopted a resolution on the status of human rights in Lebanon as a result of the Israeli aggression this past summer. The Committee condemned the killing of civilians, children, older persons and women, wherever it occurred, and called for respect for life as a fundamental human right. In the report under consideration today, the international community has set out a strategy that the Lebanese Government approves and fully endorses.

In conclusion, Lebanese children should not be destined for martyrdom. Lebanese children, like all children of the world, should have the right to live and to dream of a better tomorrow. Lebanese children, like all children of the world, should be the bearers of peace in the future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): At the outset, I wish to thank Peru, as the President of the Security Council this month, for organizing this open debate on a very important topic. We also thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his tireless efforts in continuing to focus the attention of the international community on the issue of children and armed conflict. We thank Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and the representative of Save the Children for their briefings this morning and for their noble work in the promotion and protection of the rights and well-being of children around the world.

Before I continue, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Thailand welcomes and supports the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and deems the issue of children and armed conflict to be one of truly grave concern for the international community. Thailand's commitment to this issue was reaffirmed by our ratification early this year of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

Thailand welcomes the progress made in implementing resolution 1612 (2005), and also welcomes the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/826) to give equal care and attention to children in armed conflict in all situations — including as regards sexual violence committed against children in situations of armed conflict. We also believe that, given an issue of such high complexity as children and armed conflict, the entire United Nations must be involved in a system-wide manner. In addition to the role of the Security Council, the roles of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must also be fully recognized.

We also feel that for there to be effective and sustainable disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers and children affected by armed conflict, additional resources must be mobilized and effectively spent. We also believe that national ownership and the involvement of society as a whole are prerequisites for success in addressing the situation of children in armed conflict. More important,

our collective efforts must be carried out on the basis of a rights-based approach.

While we support the work of the Special Representative, we nevertheless wish to emphasize that, in undertaking her work and in compiling reports, the Special Representative, as well as the United Nations agencies concerned, should exercise the utmost care to ensure the full accuracy of reports. Unverifiable allegations should certainly be omitted from reports.

My delegation has a particular concern about paragraphs 60 to 62 of the report. We wish to stress that Thailand has no child soldiers or any situation of children in armed conflict. Over time, Thailand has made its best effort to render full protection to children affected by armed conflict from neighbouring countries. Paragraphs 60 to 62 contain inaccurate information. In particular, the Working Group mentioned in paragraph 61 was not set up by the Security Council. Naming it the Thailand Working Group of the Security Council on Children in Armed Conflict is definitely misleading. Thailand has conveyed this concern to the United Nations agencies in Bangkok, as well as to the Office of the Special Representative, and appreciates the fact that a corrigendum will be issued promptly to address the concern.

In conclusion, Thailand remains fully committed to rendering any possible cooperation to the Office of the Special Representative, the Secretary-General and the United Nations agencies concerned in our collective efforts to end the suffering of children in armed conflict around the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank all speakers for their very kind words addressed to the delegation of Peru in its capacity as the presidency of the Security Council this month.

I also wish to note my sense that we all agree that today's debate has been very interesting and fruitful. The experiences described and the various recommendations and proposals will contribute positively to the Security Council's work on this item in the future. Among the contributions, I would also highlight the Arria formula meeting held yesterday with the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I am authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the sixth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and the positive developments in the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005), in particular in the five following areas:

"(a) The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the first reports of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and welcomes the increasing awareness by some parties to armed conflicts of its relevant decisions as well as the development by those parties of action plans to end recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law.

"(b) The Security Council commends the work carried out to that effect by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, including her field activities in situations of armed conflict.

"(c) The Security Council also commends the work carried out by UNICEF and the child protection advisers of peacekeeping operations in cooperation with other relevant United Nations entities.

"(d) The Security Council welcomes the cooperation extended to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF and child protection advisers by some parties to armed conflicts in the preparation and implementation of action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law.

"(e) The Security Council welcomes the sustained activity of its Working Group on children and armed conflict and its recommendations, and invites it to continue proposing effective recommendations based on timely, objective, accurate and reliable information for consideration and, where appropriate, implementation by the Council.

"The Security Council welcomes the steps taken by national, international and 'mixed'

criminal courts and tribunals against those who are alleged to have committed grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict in violation of applicable international law.

"However, the Security Council strongly condemns the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict.

"On those bases, the Security Council reiterates its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and, in this connection, its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children and its determination to ensure respect for and continued implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) and all its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict, including its intention to act if needed in accordance with paragraph 9 of its resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council takes note of the report of the Independent Review of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism for Children and Armed Conflict, as called for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council reiterates its invitation to relevant States affected by armed conflict that are not yet involved in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to join it on a voluntary basis, in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF.

"The Security Council also reiterates its call on relevant parties to armed conflict that have not already done so to prepare and implement, as a matter of priority, concrete time-bound action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, as called for in Security Council resolution 1539 (2005).

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit by February 2008 a report on further progress in implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict which would include, inter alia:

"Information on compliance by parties to armed conflicts in ending the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict;

"Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism;

"Information on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plans referred to in paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005);

"Information on mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/48.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.